

STAMFORD MASTER PLAN 2002  
GROWTH MANAGEMENT STUDY

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT REPORT**  
SUMMARY REPORT  
SEPTEMBER 2003





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. IMPLICATIONS OF THE THREE GROWTH SCENARIOS	6
III. THE GEOGRAPHY OF GROWTH	9
IV. SUMMARY TABLE OF MAJOR POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	12



# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Growth Management Study is to describe the consequences of different levels of future growth in Stamford and to derive policy recommendations for each. The consequences of growth are described in terms of traffic and transit, urban design, and a number of economic and demographic factors such as employment levels by industry sector, population, by age cohort and net revenues to the city. Most importantly, the consequences of growth are described and evaluated in terms of the four major master plan goals:

- Maintain and celebrate the Diversity of Stamford's population and employment.
- Pursue a new City Beautiful movement, celebration and enhancing the city's main corridors, greenways, waterfront, hills, historic buildings, gateways, and especially the unique qualities of Stamford's neighborhoods.
- Protect and enhance the Quality of Life of Stamford's neighborhoods, addressing land use transitions, community resources, traffic and environmental conditions.
- Create a vibrant, seven-days-a-week, pedestrian-friendly Downtown focused both on the Transportation Center and the historic core area to its immediate north.

Because Stamford has only limited control over how much it grows, it is important to shift the dialog away from a polarized discussion of “high growth” or “no growth” and focus instead on the character of growth – where it goes, what it looks like and how equitable it is. While there may not be consensus on how much Stamford should grow, everyone can agree on the need to address the issues associated with any level of growth – issues of traffic, neighborhood intensification, access to open space. For this reason, the Growth Management Study modeled three potential futures and made policy recommendations for each.

***Trend Growth*** Population and employment continue to grow but at a somewhat slower pace than the past decade as national and regional economies slow and as a result of housing and transportation constraints. Stamford maintains its current share of regional growth.

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

### SOME GROWTH MANAGEMENT BENCHMARKS

PROJECTED 20 YEAR CHANGES IN:

	LOW	TREND	HIGH
<b>EMPLOYMENT</b>	1,800 / 2%	15,400 / 18%	34,300 / 41%
<b>POPULATION</b>	6,200 / 5%	11,700 / 10%	19,200 / 16%

PREVIOUS 20 YEAR CHANGES IN:

	1980	TODAY	% INCREASE
<b>EMPLOYMENT</b>	66,200	84,200	22%
<b>POPULATION</b>	102,453	117,000	13%

*Some Stamford Employers:*

Swiss Bank	2,900 = 11% of High Growth
General RE	900 = 50% of Low Growth

The trend employment forecasts were then adjusted down and up according to two additional scenarios:

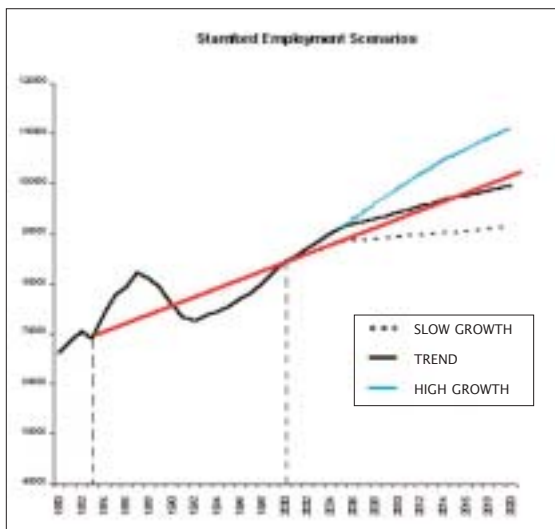
**Low Growth** Population and employment rise very slowly as national and regional growth slows and zoning and infrastructure policies constrain growth. There are few corporate relocations to Stamford and some modest growth from small firms and business expansions.

**High Growth** Stamford establishes an identity as a financial center, distinct from New York City, as a result of robust growth in global financial service through connections to world markets. This is contingent on successful policies for managing housing and transportation constraints.

## B. CHOICE, CONTINGENCY, AND HOW FAST TO GROW

If Stamford can influence growth only to a limited extent, what is the value of bracketing the most likely outcome – a trend scenario – with a low growth and high growth scenario?

The answer is apparent in the figure below, which charts both the history of Stamford's growth over the last 20 years as well as the trajectory of the high, trend and low growth scenarios for the next 20 years. What it shows is that in the course of 20 years, there will be periods that look very much like slow growth (for example, 1987 to 1992) and others that look very much like high growth (the subsequent six years, 1994 through 2000). The next 20 years is likely to see similar swings, and during those periods the policies modeled in the high and low growth scenarios will be useful.



### MANAGING FUTURE GROWTH

Choice or Contingency

- Model three potential futures
- Derive policy recommendation for each
- Acknowledge role of choice and contingency

The graph also reveals a very important aspect of how growth is perceived: Stamford's growth over the last decade has raised much anxiety, but the fact is that Stamford's level of employment is just now returning to where it was before the crash of 1987. *It is the rate of growth as much as the absolute amount of growth to which people respond.*

### C. GROWTH MANAGEMENT AND THE FOUR GOALS OF THE MASTER PLAN

Regardless of how much Stamford grows, Stamford will have to meet two major challenges: 1) the needs of an aging population and 2) a continuing shift towards jobs that require more education, higher incomes and more frequent career changes that will tend to increase the gaps between lower income and affluent families.

Some of the key findings that inform the recommendations encompassed by the Four Goals are as follows:

- *Diversity – economic, social and physical – is essential to Stamford's future.* Financial services have been, and will continue to be, the engine of Stamford's prosperity. But even as this most valued sector continues to grow, Stamford must diversify its economy to prevent polarization of age groups, income levels and housing costs. Economic diversity, in turn, will require the physical diversity to accommodate not just large office buildings and apartment complexes, but housing, commercial, and industrial developments of all types and sizes. A Smart Growth strategy for Stamford also stems the tide of industrial district disinvestment by shifting growth in office employment to technology-based manufacturing and research and development activities.
- *The Traffic and Transit study showed that it is possible to manage Stamford's traffic problems even if Stamford continues to grow as it has over the last decade. But there is no "magic bullet."* It will require an aggressive mix of mitigation strategies including 1) cooperation by employers, 2) more transit, and 3) strategic land-use decisions – in particular, putting development where it is accessible by transit, especially the "Greater Downtown" (Core, Corridor and Collar).
- *The Urban Design Study showed that there is no shortage of physical space for growth in Stamford.* In fact, in order to complete both the vision of the downtown and the visions for neighborhood revitalization, Stamford will need to grow. The challenge is to direct development to the right places and then to design it properly.

Smart Growth policies would seek to direct development to existing centers, to transit-accessible locations, and to places where new development supports urban design goals.



Affordable housing in Waterside



Traffic and transit



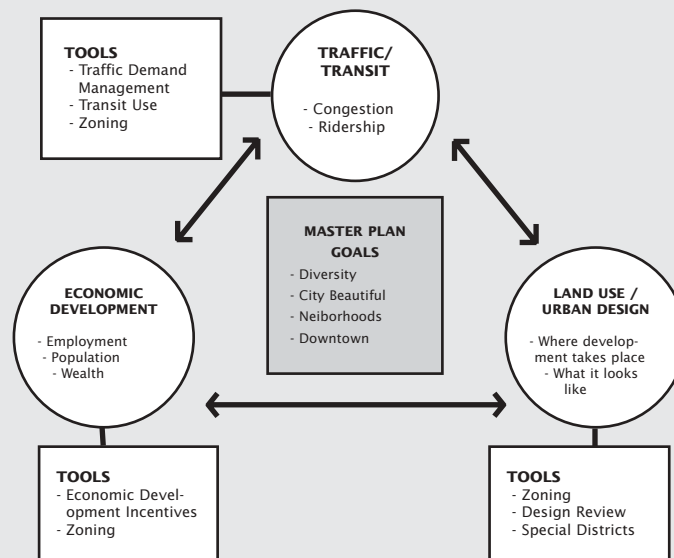
Stamford's open spaces

### INTERRELATED ISSUES

The exercise highlighted the extent to which the issues being addressed in the growth management study, as well as in the major goals of the master plan, are interrelated.

- *The traffic problems associated with different levels of growth cannot be separated from land-use issues.* Stamford cannot build its way out of its traffic problems – widening roads, reconfiguring intersections – without destroying neighborhood quality of life. Therefore, in order to stem the tide of commuters driving in from farther and farther away, Stamford must accommodate more housing for workers at all levels and make new housing and new employment centers accessible to transit.
- *Housing and employment cannot be separated from urban design.* In order to provide more housing and employment in Stamford, initiatives described in the City Beautiful goals must inform the design of new residential and commercial developments so that they reinforce and improve the physical quality of the neighborhoods, help complete the Downtown, and support transit. Also, population growth must be balanced by increased access to well-designed parks and open spaces.
- *Urban design cannot be separated from the Downtown recommendations.* To protect the neighborhoods from unattractive intensification, Downtown must become the focus for new development because there is both the physical capacity and the political will to put new development in the Downtown where it is most accessible to transit.
- *The need for economic and social diversity cannot be separated from issues of urban design and Downtown redevelopment.* Stamford must offer a variety of sites for different kinds of housing – from contextual infill informed by the design guidelines of the *City Beautiful* initiative, to apartment buildings in locations and configurations outlined in the *Downtown* initiative. Stamford must also offer a diverse range of sites for different kinds of commercial development – from office buildings Downtown, to new flex-industrial buildings in the industrial districts, to the small-scale infill buildings in neighborhood commercial centers as described in the *Neighborhood Quality of Life* initiative.

### INTERCONNECTED ISSUES





## E. STAMFORD IN ITS REGIONAL CONTEXT

The future of Stamford's economy cannot be separated from prospects for the larger region of which it is part. In reality, Stamford is part of several regions:

- It is the largest city in southwestern Fairfield County. The city draws much of its workforce from surrounding towns, and is also a center of cultural, recreation and retail activities. Over the last quarter of a century, the economies of Stamford and Fairfield County have grown at about the same speed, but Stamford has fared better than many other cities in the county.
- Stamford is also one of several regional centers in the larger New York-New Jersey-Connecticut metropolitan area surrounding New York City. In its 1996 Third Regional Plan for the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut Metropolitan Area, Regional Plan Association classified downtown Stamford as one of 11 regional downtowns that should be targeted for growth in the first part of the 21st Century. Most of the financial service firms that have located and grown in the city were previously located in Manhattan, and a strong connection remains between Stamford's office industries and New York City's financial services complex. Stamford's job growth out-paced growth in the Tri-State region in the 1970s and much of the 1980s. Since the late 1980s, Stamford and the region have grown at a similar pace.
- In addition, the city is part of the larger Northeast metropolitan corridor stretching from Boston to Washington DC. Important transportation links, such as I-95 and Amtrak's Northeast Corridor line, connect Stamford to other centers along the corridor, including Providence, New Haven, Bridgeport, Newark, New Brunswick, Philadelphia, Wilmington and Baltimore.

As Stamford looks to its future, its growth will be affected by what happens in these larger regions. The quality of housing, schools and amenities in the rest of southwestern Fairfield will affect the size and quality of the labor force that Stamford employers can draw from. The health of the larger Tri-State economy will either aid or impede Stamford's growth. The quality of transportation links to other Northeast cities will also affect the type and pace of Stamford's growth.



## II. IMPLICATIONS OF THE THREE GROWTH SCENARIOS

### **Low Growth**

- There will be more stability during periods of economic expansion as there will be less pressure on neighborhoods and on city services. But Stamford will also be more vulnerable to downturns in the national economy and neighborhoods will be more susceptible to decline during slow economic times.
- Stamford and its residents will be somewhat wealthier, although there will not be resources for significant investments in open space, housing and infrastructure.
- There is less population growth to accommodate but there is a greater disparity between ages because there are fewer working-age families.
- There are smaller increases in traffic, but because population does not keep up with job growth, housing and traffic remain the big challenges.

### **Trend Growth**

- In a trend scenario, most employment growth, with the proper policies, can be contained in the downtown.

However, housing and transportation are significant obstacles.

- Stamford and its residents are wealthier, allowing some choices as to how to direct new resources. But disparities between rich and poor increase.
- Disparities between population and job growth worsen, although age disparities are reduced with more working-age families.

### **High Growth**

- Stamford, will be wealthier – both its residents and the municipality – allowing more discretionary spending on a variety of quality-of-life initiatives; improvements to schools, more parks and affordable housing, completion of the downtown and neighborhood centers.
- However, aggressive strategies are needed to improve transportation, expand housing options, and educate more workers to enter the labor force. Also, Stamford's diversity is threatened by a growing disparity in incomes. It will be difficult to protect the neighborhoods and the industrial districts from unwanted intensification.

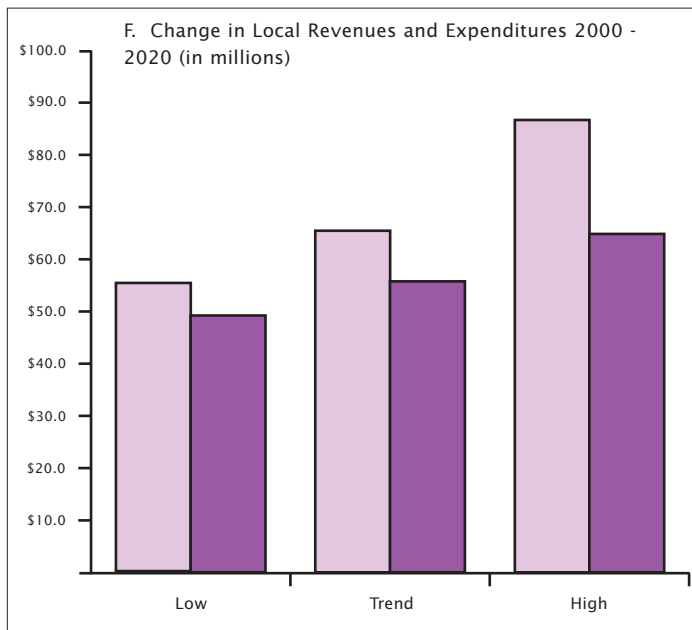
**HIGH GROWTH**

<b>GOOD NEWS</b>	<b>BAD NEWS</b>	<b>POLICY</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Stamford is wealthier</li> <li>▪ Personal income rises</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Income polarization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Diversify economy</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Resources are available for public initiatives               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Schools</li> <li>- Open space</li> <li>- Affordable housing</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pressure on:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Neighborhood quality</li> <li>- Open space</li> <li>- Housing affordability</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Purchase open space: citywide greenway</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Complete downtown and neighborhood centers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Traffic problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Aggressive:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Carpooling, flex-time</li> <li>- Regional transportation</li> <li>- Housing in Stamford near transit</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**LOW GROWTH**

<b>GOOD NEWS</b>	<b>BAD NEWS</b>	<b>POLICY</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Local revenues exceed expenditures</li> <li>▪ Personal income rises somewhat</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No resources to make up deficit in open space and affordable housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Maximize access to state and federal sources</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Neighborhoods do not change much</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No significant redevelopment downtown or in neighborhood centers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consolidation of growth in downtown and centers</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Local traffic increases minimized</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Regional traffic impacts from highways</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Promote flex-time, carpooling, etc., and regional transportation initiative</li> </ul>

Revenues increase by more than expenditures in all scenarios, particularly in the High Growth.



## HOW WOULD YOU SPEND AN ANNUAL SURPLUS OF:

\$2 MILLION (LOW GROWTH)?

\$10 MILLION (TREND GROWTH)?

\$30 MILLION (HIGH GROWTH)?



### Affordable Housing

\$1.5 million/year for 10 years to create 1,000 units (\$14M total)

### Open Space

- \$4 million to clean up existing parks (Ward Associates)
- \$3.2 million per year to acquire another 200 acres, the minimum required for High Growth (\$64M total)



### Schools

- \$2-4 million to build new school addition

### Public Works

- \$15 million to renovate Old Town Hall



### Traffic Mitigation

- \$3.5 million/year for intersection improvements with Low Growth
- \$5.5 million/year for intersection improvements with High Growth, if success with housing plus either implementation of 20% of the Traffic Demand Management measures or doubling transit.

### III. THE GEOGRAPHY OF GROWTH

#### WHERE SHOULD STAMFORD GROW

- Retail and office encroachment in the industrial growth districts should be halved from the levels suggested by the build out study, to no more than 5% of the total growth in these sectors.
- In all of the scenarios, manufacturing employment declines, making these districts vulnerable to retail and office encroachment. To stem this trend, and to support diversity, a smart growth strategy would redirect some of this office development to flex industrial, high-value-added production activities (5% and 10% of total office growth respectively for the Trend and High Growth scenarios).
- In a Trend or High Growth scenario, a combined 80% of new housing should be directed to the “Greater Downtown” (Core, Corridor and Collar) and South End. Most of the remainder should go to neighborhood centers. Undirected neighborhood intensification should be avoided in favor of targeted efforts at neighborhood revitalization.
- In a Trend or High Growth scenario, a combined 70% of new office development needs to be directed to the “Greater Downtown”: 60% in the Core and Corridor, and 10% as intermediate scale development in the Collar, including portions of the South End immediately proximate to the train station.





#### WHAT DOES THIS MODEL SHOW?

##### ***The Blue Pieces***

represent all of the sites for which, as of 1999, there were proposals for development, including the Mill River Corridor project. Since that time, two or three of these projects have been completed.

If all of these project proposals shown in blue were completed, it would represent:

- 90% of the Trend level of growth in new office employment
- 60% of the Trend level of growth in new housing

##### ***The White Pieces***

represent all of the additional underutilized sites, for which there are no proposals at the moment, but which are likely to be redeveloped over the next 20 years.

If all of the project proposals shown in blue and white were completed, it would represent:

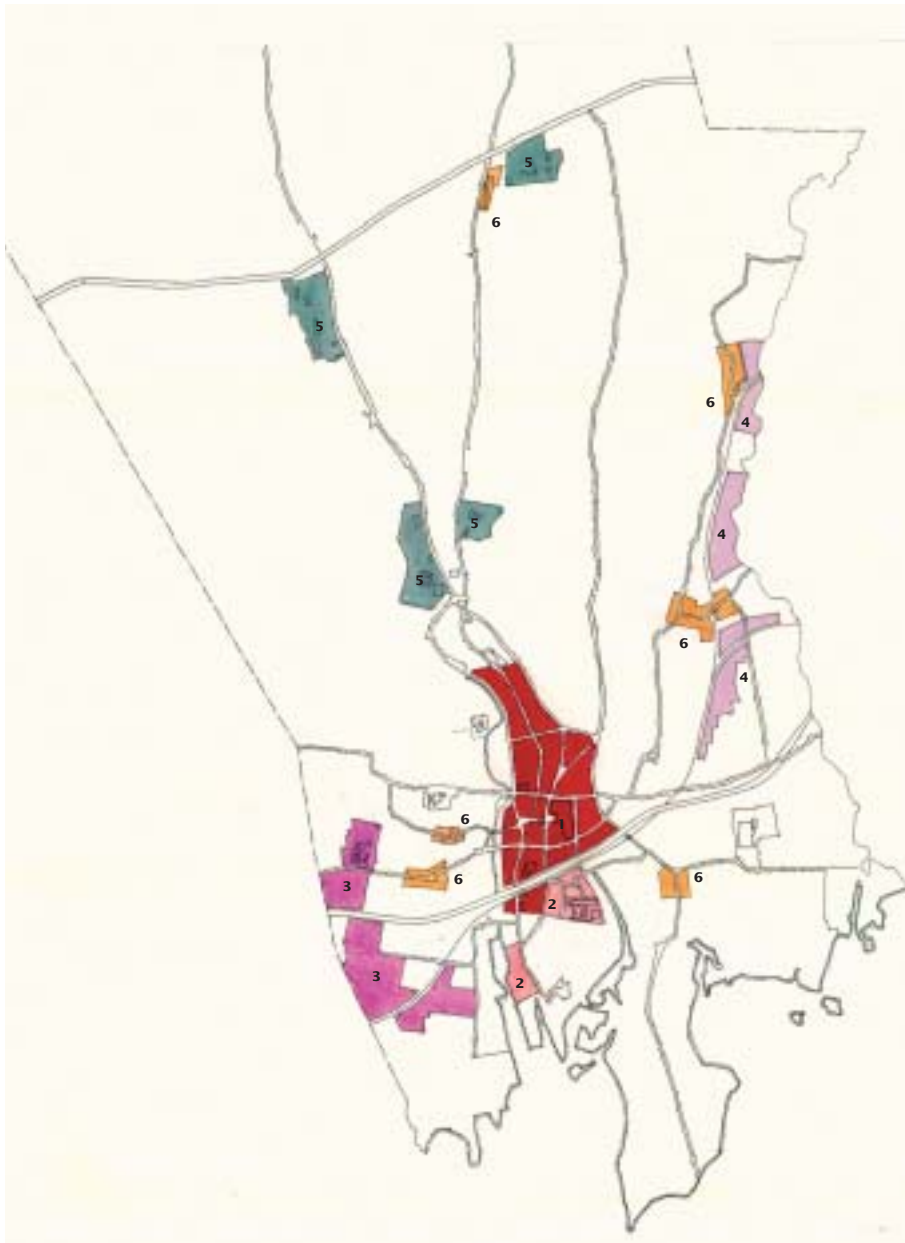
- 50% of the High level of growth in new office employment
- 50% of the High level of growth in new housing

##### ***The Pink Pieces***

represent additional small-scale developments that primarily help complete the historic, Pedestrian Core of the downtown. This growth would only take place under "smart high growth" policies that limit future growth in places not accessible by transit.

If all of the project proposals shown in blue and white and pink were completed, it would represent:

- 70% of the High level of "smart growth" in new office employment
- 60% of the High level of "smart growth" in new housing



- 1. Greater Downtown
- 2. South End
- 3. West Side Industrial Districts
- 4. East Side Industrial Districts
- 5. Ridge Road Office Districts
- 6. Neighborhood Centers



## IV. SUMMARY OF MAJOR POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Attached is a summary of the major policy recommendations and findings emerging from the Growth Management exercise, including several meetings with senior staff at the Land Use Bureau and Economic Development office. The following general observations should be noted:

- An attempt is made to distinguish between the policies for each of the three growth scenarios. While there are certain policies that are particular to each growth scenario, in large measure the differences are a matter of degree – all of the policies are worth pursuing regardless of the levels of future growth and some policies are the same regardless of how much Stamford grows (for example, policies relating to the elderly).
- For each higher level of growth, the policies are progressively more ambitious both for traffic mitigation and in terms of how much housing and office development is directed to downtown and transit-accessible centers.
- In progressing from the Trend to the High Growth scenario, economic diversity policies shift from an emphasis on exploiting new opportunities within the New York City metropolitan market to exploiting connections to new national and international markets. This reflects Stamford's progression from a satellite of New York City to an employment center in its own right.



Summary of Growth Management Related Policies			
	Low Growth	Trend Growth	High Growth
Employment	Locate 65% of future office development in the "Greater Downtown" (Core, Corridor and Collar) and in neighborhood centers	Locate 65% of future office development in the "Greater Downtown" and in neighborhood centers	Locate 70% of future office development in the "Greater Downtown" and in neighborhood centers
	Promote industrial retention strategies to minimize employment losses. Allow limited redevelopment in manufacturing districts for housing and technology-based manufacturing.	Promote economic diversity by identifying space-constrained businesses of different kinds in NYC. Redirect half of potential office growth in the industrial districts (5% of overall office growth) to technology-based industry.	Promote economic diversity by identifying new national and international markets. Redirect half of potential office growth in the industrial districts (10% of overall office growth) to technology-based industry.
	Promote state-wide initiatives to direct new development to Stamford		
	Promote traffic demand management (TDM)* to maintain levels of service on Stamford roadways. (* See the Traffic and Transit Report for more detailed recommendations)	Promote a combination of at least two traffic mitigation strategies (more transit, more housing or TDM) to maintain levels of service on Stamford roadways.	Aggressively pursue all three traffic mitigation strategies (more transit, more housing, TDM) to maintain levels of service on Stamford roadways. Lobby for statewide smart growth and transportation initiatives.
Population	Locate 65% of new housing in transit-accessible locations in the Greater Downtown and South End and 20% in neighborhood centers	Locate 75% of new housing in transit-accessible locations in the Greater Downtown and South End and 10% in neighborhood centers	Locate 80% of new housing in transit-accessible locations in the Greater Downtown and South End and 15% in neighborhood centers
	Stabilize Stamford's affordable neighborhoods	Support and enhance Stamford's affordable housing initiatives.	Provide more housing in Stamford at all levels of affordability. Lobby for a statewide housing policy.
	Promote flexible housing models for the elderly in transit-accessible locations	Promote context sensitive design for new housing Promote flexible housing models for the elderly in transit-accessible locations	Promote context sensitive design for new housing Promote flexible housing models for the elderly in transit-accessible locations
Income to the City	Identify state and federal funding for housing and infrastructure initiatives	Increase funding for design and engineering of infrastructure improvements to leverage state and federal capital funding.	Comprehensive affordable housing program supported by city revenues
	Consolidate city services and identify privatization opportunities.		
		Implement improvements to existing parks and open space facilities	Use new net revenues for open space acquisition and community facilities Promote city funding of workforce training and economic incentives to diversify the economy.